

## Summer heat, a trip to the ice houses is what is needed

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**In Val D'Itria? No, in Cazzago.** If, the first time we came to this place, we were blindfolded, **we might mistake the ice houses on the shore of Lake Varese for the small, stone houses that can be found in Cisternino, Alberobello and Locorotondo, in Puglia.**

The *trulli of Varese Province* can be found in natural surroundings; the charming village, on the lakeshore, is home to the so-called *giazzere* or *giizzer*, **buildings made entirely of stone, for the purpose of containing ice. But why here? Because, in the past,** the ice that formed in Lake Varese, extremely nearby, was collected and kept inside these monuments to local history and to human intelligence, that came from rural traditions. It is no accident that also in the boiling hot Puglia, the task of these buildings was (and still is) to keep the temperature inside constant.

Here, in these parts, (of course, this was before the advent of freezers and electric cool boxes), **the ice served, during the year, to preserve the fish that had been caught,** which could then be sent to markets in Lombardy (Verziere, in Milan, Saronno, Busto Arsizio, Gallarate, Varese, Gavirate, and others) and in Piedmont (Arona, Novara, Vercelli and Turin), and even in France. The *giazzere* also provided ice for medical purposes, for compresses, to treat fevers and inflammation.

**The few houses and very narrow streets provide visitors with tranquillity, and take all their cares away.** From the ice houses, there is a wonderful view that is dominated by the presence of the lake, which can be reached in a few minutes on foot.

In the 1980s, **Alba Bernard**, a historian in love with Cazzago Brabbia, discovered the ice houses, and did all she could to attract attention to them, as she considered them “an outstanding example of cultural heritage connected to the fishing tradition of the area of the Varese lakes,” that should be safeguarded. Around the year 2000, **the three ice houses in Cazzago were restored,** and so, the old *giazzere* lost their role as a place of storage, and became genuine monuments.

For a complete visit of the lake, it is possible to travel the length of the small, wooden harbour, or quench your thirst in the characteristic bar “on the edge of the lake”: benches sheltering beneath

imposing trees, boats manoeuvring, a cool breeze. What a perfect mix for a hot summer's day!

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